

ROOTS OF JUSTICE

A Social Justice Newsletter

Saint Patrick's Church

Winter
2009/2010

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BIX – OUR LOCAL PROPHET

By Greg Speltz

On November 2, 2009, Fr. Bill Bichsel and four companions cut through three fences at the Bangor Trident Nuclear Submarine base, some 30 miles from Seattle. On their four-hour walk onto the base, they poured vials of their own blood on the ground in symbolic expiation for the blood spilled by nuclear weapons. They hammered on the ground in symbolic destruction of the weapons stored there and scattered sunflower seeds, symbols of life and peace. They carried a banner that read: "Disarm Now Plowshares: Trident: Illegal, Immoral."

Surprisingly, almost frighteningly, they came within clear eyesight of

the very heart of the installation before they were accosted, thrown to the ground face down and hooded. There they lay for four hours.

Commenting on that moment, Fr. Bichsel, familiarly known only as Bix, says he experienced only peace. It was the fulfillment of a dream he long envisioned of standing in the very face of destruction and death, but still confident of the greater power of the resurrection and life. So he felt only peace.

The "Plowshares Action" had been explored, prayed over and planned for a year by the five: Bix, 81; Susan Crane, 65; Lynne Greenwald, 60; Fr. Steve Kelly, SJ, 60; and Ann Montgomery, RSCJ, 83. They saw the naval base as a threat to all creation. The base has the largest concentration of nuclear armaments in the United States. Each of its super bombs has 30 times the explosive power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The "Plowshare Action" term refers to the prophet Isaiah's foretelling a time when nations would turn their swords into plowshares.

Bix had made his personal decision to such action earlier in the year when he traveled to Japan, stood at the Nagasaki memorial, and was overcome by a sense of horror at what his nation had done there. He had led a delegation to apologize to the people of Japan. But he sensed that was not enough.

Before a final decision, he wrote to his Jesuit superior for permission and a blessing.

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Prophet from Page 1

His Provincial, Fr. Patrick J. Lee, SJ, responded in part: "I have told you that I see your role in our province as a prophet – called by God to proclaim a message of peace. ...in Nagasaki you once again heard God call you into action. I know you have listened hard to that call, praying and discerning for over a year. Go with my blessing and my prayers, Bill."

To those who question an 81-year-old man with a serious heart condition doing an action almost guaranteeing imprisonment, Fr. Bichsel responds, "Jesus is not cautious. He doesn't have to mull things over." The priest can speak with such abandon because this is just another step in a long, long journey.

Born in Tacoma, he joined the Jesuits and did his last three years of theology in Berlin, Germany, where he was ordained in 1959. Commenting on those days, he says that because of the language factor, the only test he passed the first year was a test for tuberculosis. It is a self-deprecating and humorous comment, typical of Bix.

Early in his ministry he was assigned to St. Leo's, Tacoma, and immediately became involved with the homeless at the Martin Luther King Center. His first year at St. Leo's, he also was first arrested at the Bangor naval base.

In search of community, and as a priest, he then spent six months hitchhiking across the U.S. Upon his return he joined two other Jesuits in Seattle, where he worked as a community organizer. That task also earned him arrest and a stint in the King County jail.

In 1989 he co-founded a Catholic Worker house, the Guadalupe House, in Tacoma, where he still lives, offering hospitality and a place to live for those having no home of their own. "Community is what a Catholic Worker House is about," he says. "In this setting personal relationships and friendship are more important than achievement."

In 1998 when the first George Bush was speaking at Seattle University, Bix rose in the audience to correct what he considered misinformation given by the speaker. Bush laughed as Bix was escorted from the auditorium in handcuffs.

Fr. Bichsel also became engaged in the School of the Americas issue with his friend Fr. Roy Bourgeois, crossed the line at Fort Benning in 1997 and was sentenced to six months in Sheridan federal prison.

In 2006 the University of Puget Sound invested him with an honorary doctorate in Human Services. They cited him "a man of God, man of conviction, man of the streets, and man of the people, who has bestowed honor on the least among us." It could hardly be said better.

In the near future he will no doubt stand before a federal judge. And again he will experience a sense of peace, confident that judicial power will be trumped by the resurrection.

Greg Speltz is an active member of St. Pat's Social Justice Committee

**Disarm Now Plowshares
Trident: Illegal + Immoral
November 2, 2009
All Souls Day**



Five people arrested on Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, WA.

**Lynn Greenwald,
Susan Crane,
Anne Montgomery RSCJ,
Steve Kelly, S.J.,
Bill "Bix" Bichsel, S.J..**



Father Bichsel co-celebrates Mass with Father Pat Clark at St. Patrick's Church, November 2009



SOA Watch Activists Sentenced to Federal Prison

On January 25, 2010 in Columbus, Georgia, human rights advocates Nancy Gwin, Ken Hayes, and Fr. Louis Vitale were all given maximum federal prison sentences of six months each for civil disobedience opposing the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC). Along with Michael Walli, these three individuals crossed onto Fort Benning property on November 22, 2009. Michael consciously chose not to return for his trial, and the judge issued a warrant for his arrest.

Who is my Neighbor?

By Rich Gamble

Editor's note: Nickelsville is a community of homeless people that began in response to then City of Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels' policy of clearing out homeless encampments throughout the city. Nickelsville is both a way for homeless people to live together in safety, and a public reminder that there is a lack of safe shelter and housing in our communities.

I received a call the morning of Saturday October 3, 2009 from the community of homeless people known as "Nickelsville" asking if I could meet with them as soon as possible. When we met later that afternoon representatives asked if they could stay in my church for one month beginning October 7. [Editor's Note: Nickelsville had just recently been evicted from Port property.]

I pointed out that we do not have a parking lot, explained that the church gets used by a wide variety of groups throughout the week, and noted that the only place available most of the week was the sanctuary itself. And since two congregations worship in the church, the space would not be available to them all day on Sundays. They said that they were willing to work with what we could offer.

The next day my congregation gathered after worship to discuss the issue and decided to offer the sanctuary to Nickelsville for one month. On Monday morning I informed the president of the preschool which uses part of the church building. The next day, I went around to those who live closest to the church to explain what was happening. On Wednesday afternoon representatives from Nickelsville and I met with the leaders of the preschool to discuss their concerns, and on Wednesday evening the Nickelsville community moved into Keystone.

The response from the community was mixed. Many were supportive, some have come by to drop off food and supplies; but even those who called me to complain were very civil. There were some of the usual fears associated with stereotypes of homeless people as criminals, but the main complaint of those who lived nearby was that it was not fair for my church to bring outsiders into their community - Keystone was being unfair to its neighbors.

This brought to mind a story from the Christian faith tradition. Jesus was asked by a lawyer about the core of the faith which, both agreed, was to love God with their whole being and to love their neighbors as themselves. But the lawyer, seeking a limit on whom to love, asked, "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied with a story about a man who was robbed and beaten and left penniless, naked and bleeding in a ditch. The upright leaders of the community left the man there and did not offer aid, but a foreigner passing by stopped and provided aid sufficient to get the man back on his feet. "Who was the neighbor to the man in the ditch?" Jesus asked. "The one who stopped and helped," replied the lawyer. Then Jesus invited him to "Go and do likewise".

In this story Jesus flips the perspective on the word neighbor. The lawyer wanted to use "neighbor" as a way to limit who was worthy of his compassion and justice. Using the lawyer's perspective, neighbors are the people living close to me. Neighbors are the people living in houses like me. Neighbors are people born in this country like me. The word neighbor is used as a boundary marker, and beyond the line, people are not as worthy of compassion and justice. In this use of the word, the focus is on me and how people relate to me.

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Rev. Rich Gamble, pastor of Keystone church, and members of the Nickelsville community.



The Keystone community advocates for "Housing Not Harassment" in response to Seattle's sweeps of homeless neighborhoods.

"The power in the world today is built on violence and greed. For us to make love the foundation of our lives means changing ourselves and our world in radical ways. Call it work towards social justice, equality, or sustainability; we call it turning the world upside-down."

Rev. Rich Gamble

Who Is My Neighbor from Page 3



Jesus flips the word, taking the perspective of the person most vulnerable. He asks, “Who is the neighbor to the man in the ditch?” Jesus’ question turns the discussion of neighbor into one that breaks down barriers.

**Revealing
Our Best Kept Secret:
Introduction to
Catholic Social Teaching**

**Wednesdays in Lent
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
St. Pat’s Social Hall**

How do we live out the Gospel in today’s world? The Catholic Church provides us with guidance in its social teaching. Catholic social teaching is a collection of documents from Vatican II, papal encyclicals and other church leaders that put the Gospel into our current context. The latest of these documents was released by Pope Benedict last year and is called *Charity in Truth*.

St. Patrick’s Social Justice and Adult Faith Development Committees are sponsoring a Lenten series that will begin with an overview of Catholic social teaching, including *Charity in Truth*, on Wed., Feb. 24. The series continues with a four-part discussion (March 3, 10, 17, & 24) about the main contents of *Charity in Truth*, especially how we are to live as Christians in a world where over half of the human population survives on less than \$2 a day. After reflecting on the dire global situation, the pope calls us to adopt “new lifestyles” (no. 51).

Parishioner **Jim Thomas** will present the overview and then facilitate the four-part discussion. Jim serves as the Director of Adult Faith Formation for Catholic Social Teaching and Family Life with the Archdiocese of Seattle.



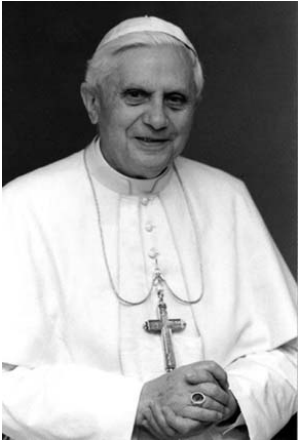
Those who want to use the word neighbor as a barrier to compassion may well be upset with those who see the word as an invitation to shatter all such barriers. Nickelsville started in part as a protest against the sweeps policy of Mayor Nickels – a policy designed to deny habitation to those who may have no legal claim on the word neighbor. It is my hope that we as a community will rise up to claim the moral invitation found in the people who need neighbors.

In the time that they stayed with us, the Nickelsville community worked hard to care for the church building and show consideration to those living nearby. One night a man from Nickelsville approached me and said, “Thank you for letting us stay here. I was really thankful to have a place to come to and I really appreciate your congregation opening up your home (his arms open to include the sanctuary filled with people sleeping around and under the pews) and inviting people in.”

In his sincere appreciation I feel the gentle challenge to do more than open up a space in our building. I feel the call to open up a space in this community for these our neighbors.

Rich Gamble is pastor of Keystone United Church of Christ www.Keystoneseattle.org; and lead organizer for Faithful Action in Transforming Homelessness – FAITH, a project of the Archdiocesan Housing Authority / Catholic Housing Services working to end homelessness through advocacy www.faihadvocracy.org.

This piece was first printed in Real Change News. Real Change exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.



“Love – caritas – is an extraordinary force which leads people to ... courageous and generous engagement in ... justice and peace.”
Pope Benedict XVI,
Charity in Truth, 2009

“Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness” is “the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity”. Thus begins *Caritas in Veritate*, the Encyclical addressed to the Catholic world and “to all people of good will”.

Growing Unrest in El Salvador Over Metallic Mining.

by Phelia Lorenzen

Two general tenets of Catholic Social Teaching come to mind when we raise our voices here in the United States on behalf of not only our friends of Nueva Trinidad, but also their friends and neighbors in the northern region of El Salvador: **stewardship of God's creation, the earth itself; and, economic and social justice for the marginalized who inhabit God's creation.**

This is not the time for me to offer a full history of the struggle going on against the international mining companies seeking to profit from metallic mining in El Salvador, but I can offer highlights of recent actions that, indeed, jeopardize the solidarity and self-determination of Salvadoran communities who will need our support in the coming months.

Next door to Nueva Trinidad, in the department of Cabañas, **Pacific Rim Mining** has, for more than three years, sought permits from the government to extract metals from the region. Such action will negatively impact water tables, water purity, forestation, soil contamination, and the health of any person eating, drinking, washing clothes, bathing, growing produce, or raising livestock. A majority of the communities are against this; the Salvadoran government is trying to manage the problems; social movements are increasing to protest mining; and the Church has protested—in fact, the Conference of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church published a declaration of opposition to mining in El Salvador

- The Salvadoran government, under the new President Funes, froze all permits for exploration or extraction until the entire issue between the people and the company can be resolved.

- So, Pacific Rim initiated a lawsuit against the government – under a condition of **CAFTA** that permits litigation when a company is not allowed to enter a country and gain profits. **Free Trade being prohibited.** This arbitration has been approved and is getting under way. Should Pacific Rim win this case, the ramifications for El Salvador and all of Latin America are too severe to contemplate. (Another company working in the Dept. of Morazon, The Commerce Group, has also brought a lawsuit against the government.)
- In Cabañas, **three anti-mining activists have been murdered.** No one is taking responsibility, but anger and unrest prevails. Activist Marcelo Rivera was shot, tortured, and thrown down a well. Another activist, Ramiro Rivera Gomez, died from several gunshot wounds. Just before Christmas, Dora Recinos Sorto was gunned down in the back while walking home from washing clothes. Her toddler was wounded; she was eight-months pregnant.
- In addition, Fr. Luis Quintanilla, a Catholic priest involved in the promotion and defense of human rights, has been the victim of physical assault, death threats, and attempted murder. Oscar Luna, the Ombudsman in Defense of Human Rights in El Salvador, has received death threats. And reporters at Radio Victoria, a community station in Cabañas, have been threatened with kidnapping and death. Dissension within the community; mining companies intimidating residents; church leaders threatened; anger and fear growing. **Violence erupting.**

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Funeral of Marcelo Rivera, a great community leader from San Isidro, in the northern department of Cabañas. (Share Foundation)



On Friday, January 8th, communities affected by ongoing violence against anti-mining activists and the National Working Group Against Metallic Mining invited the Salvadoran people and the international community to a vigil in remembrance of Ramiro Rivera and Dora Recinos Sorto. The vigil, called the *Ecumenical Vigil for Justice and Dignity for the Victims and Population of Cantón Trinidad, Cabañas*, took place in Trinidad, where both anti-mining activists were killed on the eve of the new year. (Share Foundation)

Editor's note: "Canton Trinidad" is a different community from St. Patrick's sister parish of Nueva Trinidad



Monseñor Oscar Romero
1917 – 1980

March 24, 2010 will mark the 30th Anniversary of the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Days before his murder the archbishop told a reporter:

"You can tell the people that if they succeed in killing me, that I forgive and bless those who do it. Hopefully, they will realize they are wasting their time. A bishop will die, but the church of God, which is the people, will never perish."

Learn more about
Israel/Palestine

**“Finding Hope
Amid the Rubble of the
Israel/Palestine Peace
Process: What is the
role and responsibility
of Americans?”**

a presentation by
Israeli-American peace and
human rights activist
Dr. Jeff Halper

Our Lady of the Lake
8900 35th Ave. NE, Seattle
Sunday, February 21
7:00PM

El Salvador from Page 5

The citizens of both Nueva Trinidad and Arcatao have been actively engaged for three years in the struggle in their own region against Tribune Resources Corporation (no relation to the Chicago-based Tribune Company) that seeks to invade Chalatenango. And they actively support solidarity efforts with the people of Cabañas. Several civil organizations are taking to the radio, the streets, and community meetings throughout El Salvador to protest any new mining efforts in the country. La Mesa, a strong national think tank/social justice group, is a vibrant voice in protesting mining and has presented a bill to the government that would change the constitution to prohibit in perpetuity all metallic mining.

As events progress, St. Patrick’s will be informed not only about the direction this issue takes, but also the advocacy that we can provide on behalf of the Salvadorans who seek justice in this matter and who struggle for clean water, long-term economic sustainability, good earth for their farms, and thriving forests and landscapes. In fact, the Sister Parish Work Group and Social Justice Committee have a representative attending meetings of a fledgling coalition that plans to provide education and advocacy on behalf of those fighting mining interests. It is a group promoted by CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) and is made up of secular and faith-based organizations here in Seattle that have ties to El Salvador and other Latin American countries dealing with mining travesties.

Free Trade has its place in our global economy, but not at the price of the devastation of God’s earth or the disintegration of communities that fought a civil war for 12 years to protect self-determination and land reform; and especially not at the price of the lives of our friends in El Salvador. When the time is right, we will be informed and ready to advocate. ***We must and we can—pay attention.***

Phelia Lorenzen is an active member of St. Pat’s Social Justice Committee and the Sister Parish Workgroup that fosters our relationship with the community of Nueva Trinidad, El Salvador.

My week in Gaza
by Jack Smith

Jack Smith is a member of the St. Patrick’s community. Following are his personal reflections after a recent trip to Gaza with a delegation sponsored by Physician’s for Social Responsibility

When people heard I was going to Gaza there were two common comments. Why are you going there and will you be safe? In fact, I was very safe in Gaza. I was protected by Gaza hosts and my white, male, American privilege. The Gaza people were happy to meet and talk to any Americans who were allowed into their prison home. I am told the Israeli weapons control systems are so sophisticated that they can tell whom they are killing. They would probably not risk an incident by firing on an American, unless of course my name was Rachel Corrie. If asked why the Israelis murdered her, I answer the way some Palestinians would respond to questions of Israeli motivation, “I don’t know,” because anything is pure speculation.

I’ve seen the bombed-out buildings, the tunnels that are used to bring basic supplies—food, clothing, fuel, medicine—into Gaza from Egypt; saw where Rachel was murdered; talked with a farmer who could not ship his strawberries outside the border of Gaza; talked with people who, like the strawberries, could not leave Gaza; learned that structures cannot be rebuilt or replaced because building supplies are not allowed by Israel to enter Gaza. I saw a destroyed juice-processing plant, an industrial facility destroyed by illegal white phosphorus, talked with workers who did not speak English (I don’t speak Arabic), but somehow we connected. I learned to love the Palestinian people. They do not know why they were attacked last year or why they are now imprisoned in their own country. My goal was to keep caring, listening and to show that I understood, to learn more and commit to return to the U,S, to tell what I had learned in Gaza. That was the first full day. There were four more to experience.

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Gaza from Page 6

We went to the House of Wisdom where several of us had dialogue with Gaza intellectuals. From the 11th floor, it was a long walk to the ground because a normal power failure disabled the elevator. The daily 4 a.m. Muslim chanting, the 5 a.m. coffee with the hotel staff, the friendly black-uniformed Hamas guard who laid down his AK-47s to have morning coffee with us. Although they are often called "terrorists," this nice young Hamas soldier gave me souvenirs to bring home, but absolutely refused the t-shirt I tried to give him in return.

In conclusion, I found the people of Gaza very polite. "Welcome," "Sir," and "Thank You" were words I heard frequently. Departing was usually accompanied by a hug and perhaps a kiss (by men only). That is a very warm memory.

The other side is not as pleasant. I came to the realization that when I completed an IRS Form 1040, my check was supporting the \$3-5 billion we send each year to Israel. Much of that money buys American manufactured weapons such as F-16 fighters, Apache Helicopters, and other weapons of destruction. In the Siege of December 2008 to January 2009, there were about 1400 Palestinians killed compared with about a dozen Israelis. Out of balance? Add to those statistics the fact that 300 women and 400 children are included in the Palestinian figures. American involvement? We sent money and manufactured weapons. The fact that we did not send troops does not relieve me of the blame as enabler-country of this gross massacre that took place last year. The best I can do for now is remind you that there are lies that must be tested by truth. There is much to learn and I hope you do.

Peace to all of us.

Sam Malkandi is Waiting for Justice

by Jan Thomas

Jan Thomas is a member of St. Patrick's parish who has been touched by the plight of the Malkandi family.

By now, most people in St. Pat's Parish know about Sam Malkandi, husband of parishioner Mali Malkandi. Sam has been held in civil immigration detention for more than four years. Even though St. Pat's has shown much support for Sam and his family, immigration lawyer Bernice Funk believes we can do more.

Sam is a Kurdish Iraqi immigrant. He is detained at the NW Detention Center in Tacoma without criminal charges, but in immigration court he is alleged to have ties to terrorists. The Immigration Judge found that Sam was not supporting terrorism, yet simultaneously found him to be a danger to national security.

He is no such danger, according to Bernice, who provides volunteer assistance to the Arab American Community Coalition to advocate for the Malkandi family. She says that there is precedent for the power of the church community to proclaim what is morally right and truthful for immigrants. Our church can influence our members of Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to release Sam Malkandi to home detention, so he can again be with his family.

"Sam's legal situation remains an emergency because the government is trying to deport Sam to Iraq, even though it's illegal," she said. The United States has adopted the United Nations Convention against Torture, and Sam faces likely torture should he be returned to Iraq. One reason for that is his conversion to Christianity; another is belonging to the Kurdish minority.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles for submission should meet the following requirements:

Subject must be about Social Justice - issues, people involved, upcoming or past events.

The article should be no more than 600 words for two columns and 300 words for one column. Images may accompany article.

Deadlines for submission:

Spring - March 15th
Summer - June 15th
Fall - October 15th
Winter - December 15th

Publication is approximately one month after the submission deadline. Keep these time-frames in mind when submitting time-sensitive articles (i.e. for summer events submit for spring issue).

Articles can be hand-delivered to the Editor, mailed to St. Patrick's Church attention Social Justice Newsletter - Editor (address on page 8), or may be e-mailed to the Editor at

[mail to:Credito@mac.com](mailto:Credito@mac.com)

All articles are subject to editing and printed at the discretion of the editors.

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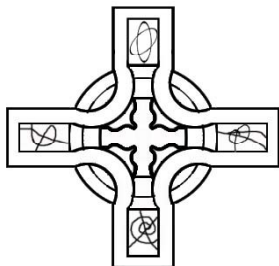
Mission Statement

This Newsletter is published by the Social Justice Committee of St. Patrick's Church. The mission of the Social Justice Committee is to increase parish awareness of the roots of social and political justice, and to take specific action to counter injustices.

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**Social Justice in our
Scriptures and Tradition**

**2010 Social Justice
Committee retreat
by Sean Lynch**

Basic Principles of Social Justice As Related to Scripture and Tradition was the theme for 2010's Social Justice Committee retreat. **John Farrell** graciously agreed to lead the committee's reflection time which included thought provoking questions and excellent readings from different spiritual texts which help explore the impetus behind the social justice movement. We reviewed passages from the Old Testament, the New Testament, "Justice in the World" (1971) from the World Synod of Bishops, Pope Paul VI's "A Call to Action" (1971), as well as others. One of the reasons why this was so fulfilling for the committee is because we don't usually have enough time at our meetings to rediscover the scriptural basis for our work on behalf of the poor, oppressed and marginalized people around the world.

From there the gathering turned to business as usual, which included an update on the Sister Parish Work Group's efforts, posting of important information about social justice topics on the SJ bulletin board in social hall, the continued success of Fair Trade sales, letter writing, and topics for this issue of Roots of Justice.

Attendees frequently made mention of how important St Patrick's Church is in their lives and how blessed we are to have a Social Justice Committee to help us put our faith into action. The committee has a tremendous wealth of involved individuals and a great parish shows us so much support in so many different ways. If you have been considering becoming more active with St Patrick's Social Justice Committee, please track one of us down and ask how you can become more involved.

We truly rely on the God given gifts of our parish members and believe that the more inclusive we can become, the more effective we can be as a force for positive change in the world.

If you have any questions about the committee, please don't hesitate to contact **Sean Lynch** at (206) 709-7852 or sean@lynchclan.com.



"...Every man and woman may be regarded as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father"

— Pope Benedict XVI

Sam Malkandi from Page 7

Thus, the U.S. legal system has failed in upholding justice for the Malkandi family.

Bernice is willing to help organize parish delegations to visit our local congressional offices. Our Congresspersons are aware of the Malkandi family tragedy, but they need continuing constituent pressure to bring about Sam's release. Watch for further information on these delegations.

**NOW ON LINE – The Newsletter can be viewed on-line.
www.stpatsseattle.org/socialjustice**